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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHOC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4767
INFO RUEHQB/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 3026
RUEHBOO/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 9728
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1749
RUEBAE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 7085
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY TEHRAN 3551
RUEHJG/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3627
BT
SECRET SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 5459

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EXDTS

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EXDTS 10451 PDS 7/19/79 (AMSTUTZ, J. BRUCE) DR-M
TAGS: PINT, PINT, SF, US
SUBJ: (S) FOR AMBASSADOR REPORTS THAT SOVIETS HOPE TO REPLACE
PRIME MINISTER AMIN WITH A BROADER BASED GOVT.

REF: KABUL 5451

1. (S - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY. I HAVE JUST HAD AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING WITH
GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AMBASSADOR DR. HERMANN SCHWIESAU.
IT WAS EXTRAORDINARY ON ACCOUNT OF WHAT HE "DISCLOSED" VIZ
RESPECT TO SOVIET INTENTIONS HERE INCLUDING THE LIKELIHOOD
OF A SOVIET-BACKED MOVE TO OUST PRIME MINISTER HAFIZULLAH
AMIN. OVER THE LAST 3 WEEKS WE HAVE HAD HINTS OF A POSSIBLE
SOVIET-ASSISTED INTERNAL COUP, BOTH FROM GDR AMBASSADOR
SCHWIESAU (KABUL 5240) AND EARLIER FROM SOVIET MINISTER-
COUNSELOR VASILII STEPANOVICH SAPHRONCHUK (KABUL 4888).
THIS TIME, THE GDR AMBASSADOR WENT MUCH FURTHER IN SPELLING
OUT SOVIET DISAFFECTION WITH THE DRA, THE SOVIET DILEMMA
ABOUT WHAT TO DO, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INTERNAL PARTY
COUP TO ELIMINATE AMIN. HE HINTED THAT THIS MIGHT OCCUR IN
AUGUST. END SUMMARY.

33.

11. SOVIET INTERESTS: SCHWIESAU SAID THAT NO INTERNAL PARTY "RADICAL CHANGE" COULD OCCUR HERE WITHOUT SOVIET SUPPORT, AND THAT SOVIET INTERESTS WOULD HAVE TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BY ANY NEW AFGHAN GOVT. "AFTER ALL," HE SAID, "AFGHANISTAN BORDERS THE SOVIET UNION AND JUST AS YOU HAVE A SPECIAL INTEREST IN ANYTHING HAPPENING IN CANADA AND MEXICO, THE SOVIET UNION HAS A SPECIAL INTEREST IN AFGHANISTAN." THUS, HE SAID, A POLITICAL SOLUTION HAS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THREE FACTORS: "SAVING THE FACE OF THE SOVIETS, SAVING THE FACE OF THE AFGHAN PARTY (PDPA), AND SAVING THE FACE OF MUSLIMS."

12. IN CONNECTION WITH SAVING SOVIET FACE, SCHWIESAU SAID THAT THE SOVIETS HAD TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THEIR RELATIONSHIP AND REPUTATION WITH "OTHER PARTIES AROUND THE WORLD." IF THE SOVIETS WERE SEEN TO ABANDON THE PARTY HERE IN AFGHANISTAN, HE SAID, IT WOULD HAVE A "VERY UPSETTING EFFECT ON PARTIES ELSEWHERE WHICH WERE FRIENDLY WITH MOSCOW." THIS COMMENT TRACKS WITH HIS COMMENT MENTIONED ABOVE (PARA 4) THAT, "WE MUST SAVE THE REVOLUTION."

13. QUESTION OF SOVIET MILITARY INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN. TOWARD THE END OF OUR CONVERSATION, SCHWIESAU VOLUNTARILY RAISED THIS QUESTION. HE SAID HE WAS AWARE THERE WAS SPECULATION IN THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY AS TO WHETHER THE SOVIETS WOULD, IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, INTERVENE MILITARILY IN AFGHANISTAN. "WERE THEY TO DO SO," HE SAID, "IT WOULD SOLVE ONE PROBLEM BUT CREATE ANOTHER." SOVIET INTERVENTION COULD ELIMINATE THE PRESENT GOVT THEREBY SOLVING ONE PROBLEM. IT WOULD, HOWEVER, CREATE ANOTHER PROBLEM; NAMELY, THAT THE "ENTIRE AFGHAN NATION" WOULD TURN AGAINST THE SOVIETS, JUST AS THE AFGHANS TURNED AGAINST THE "BRITISH INVADERS" IN THE 19TH CENTURE. HENCE, HE SAID, IT MADE NO SENSE FOR THE SOVIETS TO INTERVENE MILITARILY.

14. THE PARCHAMISTS: SCHWIESAU, IN DISCUSSING THE PARCHAMISTS, COMMENTED THAT TARAKI HIMSELF HAD BEEN ACCEPTABLE TO THE PARCHAMIST WING. THIS WAS NOT THE CASE WITH HAFIZULLAH AMIN. EXILED PARCHAMIST LEADER, BABRAK KARMAL, AND AMIN WERE "RIVALS." SCHWIESAU OBSERVED THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR AMIN AND BABRAK KARMAL TO BE IN THE SAME GOVT, REFLECTING ON THE TWO WINGS OF THE PARTY AT THE TIME OF THE REVOLUTION, SCHWIESAU CONFIRMED OUR IMPRESSION THAT THE PARCHAMISTS HAD A WIDER FOLLOWING THAN THE KHALQIS WITHIN THE PARTY AND AMONG PARTY SYMPATHIZERS, BUT THAT THE KHALQIS WERE STRONGER IN THE MILITARY. THE LATTER'S STRENGTH IN THE MILITARY PROVED DECISIVE, SCHWIESAU OBSERVED, IN PURGING THE PARCHAMISTS. I ASKED HIM WHETHER HE HAD INFORMATION AS WE DID, THAT MANY PARCHAMISTS HAD BEEN RECENTLY RELEASED FROM PUL-E-CHARKI PRISON. HE SHOOK HIS HEAD. HE SAID THOUGH THAT, AT THIS PRESENT JUNCTURE IN THE CRISIS FACING THE DRA, IT WAS NOT ENOUGH TO BRING BACK PARCHAMISTS INTO THE GOVT. "IT IS NECESSARY TO BROADEN THE BASE OF THE GOVT FAR BEYOND THE PARCHAMISTS." TWO OTHER THINGS NEED TO BE DONE TOO, HE SAID. ONE WAS TO RELEASE MANY POLITICAL PRISONERS ("EVEN PARTY MEMBERS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED"), AND THE OTHER WAS FOR A NEW GOVT TO BE "FRIENDS WITH THE MOSLEM COUNTRIES."

3. ON JULY 17, I PAID A CALL ON SCHWIESAU. HE HAD CALLED ON CHARGE PLATIN ON JULY 9, AND BESIDES WANTING TO RETURN THE COURTESY CALL, I WELCOMED AN EXCUSE TO SEE HIM. WE TALKED AN HOUR. OF ALL THE PRO-MOSCOW COMMUNIST COUNTRY AMBASSADORS HERE, SCHWIESAU IS PERHAPS THE MOST ASTUTE AND INTELLIGENT, AND CERTAINLY THE MOST APPROACHABLE. ALONE AMONG PRO-MOSCOW COMMUNIST DIPLOMATS, HE CALLS PERIODICALLY ON WESTERN AND THIRD-WORLD DIPLOMATS, AND INVARIABLY LIKES TO ENGAGE IN CANDID POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS ABOUT AFGHANISTAN. HE HAS BEEN PROVED TO BE ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT SOURCES OF INFO ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE KABUL COMMUNIST DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY AND RECENTLY ABOUT MOSCOW'S THINKING.

4. SOVIET DISSATISFACTION WITH THE DRA: YESTERDAY WE SENT A REPORT (REFTEL) ANALYZING THE PRESSURES SEEMINGLY BUILDING UP FOR AN INTERNAL CHANGE IN THE DRA LEADERSHIP. WHAT SCHWIESAU TOLD ME AT OUR MEETING CONFIRMED ALL THIS, INCLUDING THE EXISTENCE OF BEHIND-THE-SCENES NEGOTIATIONS BY SOVIET MINISTER-COUNSELOR SAFRONCHUK WITH POPA PARTY LEADERS AND OTHERS TO BRING ABOUT AN INTERNAL CHANGE. SCHWIESAU REPEATEDLY SAID THAT THE SOVIETS WERE DEEPLY WORRIED OVER THE WORSENING SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN. HE SAID, "THEY KNOW THE REGIME HAS LITTLE PUBLIC SUPPORT AND IS LOSING CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY." WHILE TELLING ME THIS, HE ALSO SAID, "WE ARE DETERMINED TO SAVE THE REVOLUTION."

5. SCHWIESAU CLEARLY LAID THE BLAME FOR THE DRA'S TROUBLES ON PRIME MINISTER/FOREIGN MINISTER HAFIZULLAH AMIN. HE DESCRIBED AMIN AS "THE STRONG MAN" IN AFGHANISTAN. "HE PERSONALLY RUNS THE ENTIRE GOVT," HE SAID, "CONTROLLING THE ARMY, THE INTERIOR MINISTRY, AND HE MAKES ALL IMPORTANT DECISIONS." AMIN HAS BLUNDERED BADLY, HE SAID, IN THE WAY HE HAS IMPLEMENTED THE GOVT'S ECONOMIC AND REFORM PROGRAMS, AND PARTICULARLY IN THE WAY HE HAS "HARSHLY" ACTED AGAINST PERSONS HE SUSPECTED MIGHT OPPOSE HIM.

6. SCHWIESAU DISMISSED TARAKI AS INEFFECTIVE. HE DESCRIBED HIM AS AN "OLD, KINDLY TEACHER, PHILOSOPHER, AND WRITER" WHO IS WELL INTENTIONED, AND LOVES THE ADULATION HEAPED ON HIM IN THE PRESS ("ESPECIALLY THE PICTURES"). "WE SUSPECT," SCHWIESAU SAID, "THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW MUCH OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE COUNTRY."

7. SOVIET "MANEUVERS: SCHWIESAU CONFIRMED THAT SOVIET MINISTER-ADVISOR SAFRONCHUK HAS BEEN GIVEN THE TASK, BY MOSCOW, TO BRING ABOUT A "RADICAL CHANGE" IN THE GOVT. SAFRONCHUK WAS GIVEN THIS TASK, SCHWIESAU SAID, BECAUSE, "IT IS NOT GOOD FOR THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR HIMSELF TO BE SEEN HOLDING THESE DELICATE NEGOTIATIONS." HE CONTINUED, "IF THESE NEGOTIATIONS FAIL, AND/OR SAFRONCHUK WERE EXPELLED AS PERSONA NON GRATA, THAT WOULD ATTRACT LESS ATTENTION AND BE LESS OF A DIPLOMATIC EMBARRASSMENT FOR THE SOVIET UNION THAN IF AMBASSADOR PUZANOV WERE EXPELLED."

8. AS TO WHAT IS LIKELY TO HAPPEN, SCHWIESAU CLEARLY INDICATED THAT A MILITARY INTRAPARTY COUP, DEPOSING AMIN AND PERHAPS OTHERS, IS WHAT THE SOVIETS INTEND. SCHWIESAU SAID THERE ARE NO DEEP DIVISIONS IN THE PDPA PARTY, MANY OF WHOM LEADING MEMBERS ARE VERY DISSATISFIED WITH THE PRESENT COURSE OF EVENTS AND AMIN'S LEADERSHIP. HE SAID THAT WHAT IS NEEDED IS A NEW PRIME MINISTER WHO IS A "STRONG MAN" AND "NOT IDENTIFIED" WITH "PRESENT" POLICIES.

9. WHEN I MENTIONED DEFENSE MINISTER VATANJAR AS A POSSIBILITY, SCHWIESAU ACTED AS IF I HAD CAUGHT HIM IN A SECRET. AFTER A PAUSE, HE SAID VATANJAR IS "NOT A POLITICIAN, BUT OF COURSE THE MILITARY IS KEY TO ANY CHANGE." THEN HE WENT ON TO OBSERVE THAT, SINCE THE REVOLUTION, VATANJAR HAS NEVER MADE A "PERSON THAT WAS PRINTED IN THE PRESS AND THAT HIS EXACT POLITICAL VIEWS ARE NOT CLEAR TO THE PUBLIC, IMPLYING BY THIS THAT VATANJAR WAS "ELFAY." SCHWIESAU WENT ON, HOWEVER, TO HINT THAT WHILE VATANJAR MIGHT PLAY A ROLE IN A COUNTER COUP, HE WAS NOT LIKELY TO BE PRIME MINISTER SINCE "HE WAS NOT EXPERIENCED."

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15. BITS AND PIECES: SCHWIESAU OBSERVED THAT THE DRA HAS "LOST CONTROL OF MANY PROVINCES." WHEN I ASKED HIM FOR EXAMPLES, HE SAID HERAT (THOUGH WE KNOW HERAT CITY REMAINS IN DRA HANDS) AND THE PROVINCES IN THE CENTRAL PART OF THE COUNTRY (THE HAZARAJAT REGION).

16. HE THOUGHT IRANIAN INFLUENCE IN AFGHANISTAN WAS MORE DANGEROUS TO THE GOVT THAN THAT OF PAKISTAN. WHEN I ASKED HIM WHY, HE SAID IT WAS BECAUSE OF IRANIAN RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE OVER THE SHIIA POPULATION WHICH RELIGIOUS ELEMENT PREDOMINATED IN THE PROVINCES BORDERING IRAN AND IN THE PROVINCES MAKING UP THE MOUNTAINOUS CENTRAL MASSIF.

17. THEN, SOMEWHAT IN CONTRADICTION TO THE ABOVE REMARK, HE SAID THAT THE PUSHTUNS WERE POLITICALLY THE MOST IMPORTANT ETHNIC ELEMENT IN THE COUNTRY. HENCE, SINCE SO MANY OF THE PUSHTUNS WERE "OPPOSING THE REGIME MILITARILY," THIS WAS ANOTHER SERIOUS POLITICAL PROBLEM.

18. COMMENT: AS A RESULT OF THIS CONVERSATION, TOGETHER WITH EARLIER ONES MENTIONED, WE BELIEVE THE EVIDENCE IS NOW CLEAR THAT THE SOVIETS ARE DISSATISFIED WITH HAFIZULLAH AMIN AND ARE TRYING TO ENGINEER A "RADICAL CHANGE." WE ARE ALSO TEMPTED TO BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS, BY MEANS OF SAFRONCHUK'S CONVERSATION WITH ME ON JUNE 24, AND SCHWIESAU'S TWO CONVERSATIONS WITH US ON JULY 9 AND 17, HAVE TRIED TO SEND US A SIGNAL. THAT SIGNAL SEEMS TO BE THAT, THEY ARE UNHAPPY WITH THE AMIN REGIME, THAT THEY ARE TRYING TO ARRANGE A CHANGE, AND (I AM SPECULATING HERE) ARE HOPING THIS WILL NOT HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON US. ONE COULD ALSO DRAW THE CONCLUSION THAT, WITH THE OBVIOUS SLIPPING GRIP THE DRA HAS OVER THE COUNTRY, THE SOVIETS HOPE THAT BY BRINGING ABOUT A CHANGE AND BROADENING THE BASE OF THE GOVT, AND BY POSSIBLY MAKING AMIN A SCAPEGOAT, THEY CAN AVOID LOSING THEIR INVESTMENT IN THIS MARXIST PARTY AND GOVT, AND AVOID A MAJOR BLOW TO SOVIET INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE. AMT:ITZ

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